

**Letter to My Daughter, Heather:      *When I Die ...***

Happy 88th Birthday to me, Heather,

According to various life expectancy calculators, I may live to age 93 (Social Security Administration; Bankrate); 97 (University of Pennsylvania, Blueprint Income); 90 (John Hancock Life); or 107 (Northwestern Mutual). That last estimate, which would have you wait, at least, another 19 years for your inheritance, strikes fear into my heart. So, let's go with the 5 year estimate after which you will only be eligible for AARP membership rather than Social Security.

Of course, I could shorten my life expectancy by spending more time working crossword puzzles by the light of a large-screen, flat panel television instead of exercising. I could drink red wine, smoke Cuban cigars, increase my intake of trans-fats, and relocate to *sprawling estates*, the new suburban development with a maze of cul-de-sacs designed to make walking and exercising as easy as taking a twenty-minute drive to the enclosed Rec Center. In addition, the stress and hazard of driving into and out of this low-walkability enclave may also help shorten my days of exhaling (or otherwise expelling) greenhouse gases.

Still, my foreseeable demise has me worried. What should you do with my carcass? I've never really liked the fatal atmosphere of funeral homes, funeral directors, funeral urns, obituary notices, caskets, viewing, visitations, the odor of embalming fluid, crematoria, churches, pews, incense, officiating clergy, organs, hymns, soloists, testimonials, receiving lines, condolences, hearses, pallbearers, graveyards, vaults, crypts, markers, headstones, plastic flowers, ... Black is not my color.

Assuming that Columbia will not have progressed to *curbside pickup* over the next decade, what are our options? If incineration for supplemental power production is the most *environmentally friendly* method, that is my choice. And if, for some reason, it is illegal to dispose of my ashes directly to the primary settling basin at the wastewater treatment plant, then, simply flush them down the toilet. I suspect my ash will be too alkaline to make good plant fertilizer.

While I would regret your wasting your modest inheritance in support of the death industry, I wouldn't mind your blowing it on a truly memorable celebration. Knowing your skills in planning such events, I will leave all the decisions to you, but I am thinking of something like an all-day-long open bar and pizza party at Shakespeare's Pizza -- all three venues - , simultaneously. I envision happy music, a casual atmosphere, laughter, -- a gathering of good friends -- some of whom I actually knew.

Wish I could join you.

Love, Dad

*Heather writes back:*

*Dad - Let's have the party now instead of later.*